

Disentangling HIV and AIDS Stigma to Improve Access to Services

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HIV and Stigma Presentation

- What is stigma?
- Why do we need to address it?
- Some strategies, interventions and tools
- How to measure it



What is Stigma?

- Real or perceived negative response to person or persons by individuals, communities or societies
 - Internal (self-stigma)
 - External



What is Stigma?

➤ It is characterized by:

- Rejection
- Denial
- Discrediting
- Disregarding
- Underrating
- Social distance



What is Stigma?

- It frequently leads to :
 - Discrimination
 - Violation of human rights
 - Violence



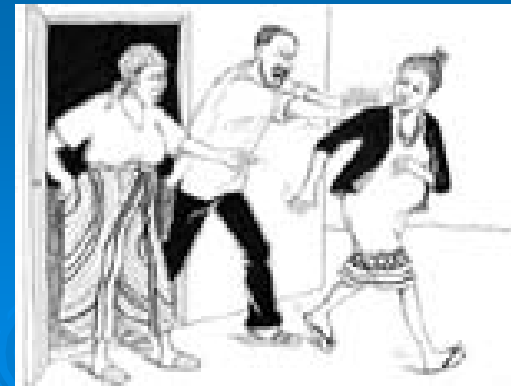
Stigma: Causes

- Stigma and HIV differs from society to society
- Stems from practical, moral, economic cultural and political factors
 - Lack of knowledge, confusion about HIV prevention, transmission, treatment
 - Traditional or religious beliefs about sickness and death
 - Judgmental attitudes about lifestyles
 - Fear
- Reinforces existing inequities



Why is Stigma Important?

- Shatters infected persons' identity and self-confidence significantly decreasing their ability to manage the disease successfully.
- Impedes health workers' capacity to implement and make progress on HIV and AIDS interventions.



Effect on the Individual/Community

- Stress, anxiety, depression, attempted suicide, isolation
- Problems with family relationships
- Increased inequities between those affected and those not affected
- Increased disability
- Concealment of disease after diagnosis (more stress and anxiety)
- Poor prognosis
- Participation restrictions (e.g. loss of job) that may affect family or community.
- Isolation
- Increase psychological and psychiatric problems
- Lack of motivation to continue treatment
- **Empowerment developed in resistance to discrimination**

Evidence- Based Data on the Effect on Health Program Interventions

- Delay in presentation for treatment leading to prolonged transmission of the disease
- Poorer treatment prognosis; more complicated and more expensive treatment



Evidence- Based Data on the Effect on Health Program Interventions

- Poor adherence and default on treatment
- Risk of drug resistance
- Continued transmission of HIV
- Increased burden on the health system
- Negative image of health program



Challenges in Addressing HIV and AIDS Stigma Reduction

- Health care workers/volunteers may perpetuate HIV and AIDS related stigma during testing, counseling, PMTCT and provision of care.
- PLWHA may become demoralized and depressed (lack of confidentiality, treatment by HCP)
- Program staff may be overwhelmed by long held beliefs about the disease

Challenges in Addressing HIV and AIDS Stigma Reduction

“Health workers are expected to know, feel and act in certain ways.Knowledge and skills, yes they have. It is part of many training programs....but what about preparing them to come to terms with their fears and anxieties about their own sexuality and morality, their prejudices?”

Stigma and the Health Care Sector

- To what extent does stigma exist among health care providers?
- Does access to specialized provision of care and support reduce stigma?
- Does development of links between clinical and community based facilities reduce stigma?



Stigma and the Health Care Sector

- What is the impact on VCT; uptake, quality of counseling and outcomes?
- What is the impact of VCT on Stigma?
- Assess people who access VCT overtime- are these individuals self stigmatizing or experiencing stigma from the outside?
- Does the surrounding environment perpetuate stigmatization?



Successful strategies for reducing AIDS related stigma

Involve PLWHA in design,
development, implementation and
evaluation



Evidence Based Ideas for Interventions

- Design a practical guide for in-service orientation and build motivation among HCP
- Develop practical tools to use for understanding and addressing stigma
- Develop counseling and “care for carers” programs
- Conduct your own “research” to look at the impact of stigma on testing, treatment, etc...

Evidence-based Ideas for Interventions

- Promote disclosure of results to significant while protecting confidentiality
- Develop support groups for individuals and family members
- Assess the PLHA-friendliness of services
- Identify opportunities to discuss stigma in community forums



Practical Tools to Address Stigma

- AED and the International Center for Research on Women developed Understanding and Challenging HIV Stigma: A Toolkit for Action
- EngenderHealth developed a stigma reduction manual for health workers
- Siyam'kela (Policy Project)- indicators, best practice
- Synergy Project: Big Issues in Brief: Stigma and HIV/AIDS

How do we measure Stigma?

- Siyam'kela Project established appropriate, measurable indicators of HIV and AIDS stigma
 - # of PLWHA who
 - Report stigma and discrimination in organizational/social setting
 - Report they were denied services because of their HIV+ status
 - Choose not to access existing support services
 - Disclose or not disclose their status

Stigma Issues from Partner Programs

- **Examples from the audience of successful strategies, interventions to decrease stigma**
- **Document stigma and reduction strategies in the partner projects**